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News Release

For Immediate Release

Murals on storm water drains raise awareness about clean water, pollution

This weekend marks the fourth year of Storm Drain Reveal, a project that has inspired other cities across the country and been recognized in national publications as an innovative approach to stormwater education. The public can view photographs of the 2014 storm drains and vote for their favorite at JRBP's booth at the Cinco de Mayo event on the square during the First Friday Art Walk May 2 and during Artsfest on Historic Walnut Street, May 3-4. Project details and a map of the storm drains can be found at www.jamesriverbasin.com.

The project is a cooperative effort of James River Basin Partnership (JRBP) and the City of Springfield in which storm drains are painted with a water quality message to raise awareness that the drains lead to our streams and rivers. Soapy water, litter, grass clippings, oil and other pollutants that end up in storm drains can impact water quality. Storm water runoff can also pick up and carry pollutants from the landscape such as excess lawn fertilizer, pet waste and sediment from construction sites. The storm drains painted in this year's event lead to either Jordan or Fassnacht Creeks, which drain to Wilson's Creek then the James River and on to Table Rock Lake.

Over the past four years, 40 storm drains have been painted by 38 different artists. The artists that painted drains this year are: Melissa Slatinsky, Alexis Rivierre, Rosa Cozzoni, Kelly Verstraete, Chris Light with Anthony Padron and Keatyn Garton, Taylor Bolls, Travis Burns, Ariel Messerer, Tracy Pierce and Holli Brown. The project has inspired similar efforts in Fayetteville, Arkansas and Columbia, Missouri. Local project organizers have also been contacted by a dozen other cities with a desire to duplicate the project, from areas as far away as Hawaii, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Florida.

Many artists who have participated have remarked on what a positive and educational experience it has been for them and others who they've shared the message with. Artist Brad Davenport was the People's Choice award winner in 2011. He said, "To be honest when the project was brought to my attention I knew very little about what happens to water once it enters a storm drain. I don't think I ever really took the time to think about it. However, once I was made aware, being a person who enjoys floating and trips to the lake with friends and family during the summer, I felt this was my chance to help bring awareness to the issue and possibly make a difference."

Laura Lynch, People's Choice award winner in 2012, echoed that experience when she stated, "Most people are surprised when I tell them that the storm drain leads directly to fresh water supplies instead of going to a treatment plant. When they do know about it they usually thank me for the effort. It is gratifying to be able to help a program that positively impacts our environment."

In support of the project, Pressure Tech donated their services to clean each storm drain.

To help the City of Springfield and JRBP fund the project this year, a Cause Momentum campaign was held with donations from the Ozark Mountain Paddlers and other local supporters.

This project is part of the City's ongoing storm water education/outreach efforts. Public education/outreach is a requirement of the City's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit, a federal mandate of the Clean Water Act. JRBP assists the City with education/outreach as part of its mission to protect water quality in the James River Basin. Information on the City's efforts to address the water quality impacts of stormwater runoff, and how individuals can help is available at www.springfieldmo.gov/stormwater.

For more information, contact Tiffany Frey, James River Basin Partnership, at tfrey@missouristate.edu or 836-6183; or Carrie Lamb, City of Springfield Environmental Services, at clamb@springfieldmo.gov or 864-1996.